



## NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL-INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

4600 SANGAMORE ROAD  
BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20816-5003

# PRESS RELEASE

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Released: Oct. 12, 2006 Contact: Marshall Hudson, 301-227-2057, marshall.a.hudson@nga.mil  
Release 06-18 Sue Meisner, 301-227-3132, susan.h.meisner@nga.mil

### **Empire Challenge 2006 Improves U.S., Coalition Intelligence Support to Troops on the Ground**

BETHESDA, Md. -- The third annual National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) Empire Challenge exercise (EC06) successfully advanced ways for U.S. and allied military organizations to identify and correct issues related to the interoperability of their intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) systems. The lessons learned in this exercise will translate to improved operations by combat forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Conducted Sept. 5 to 28, at the Naval Air Warfare Center, China Lake, Calif., the exercise included personnel, aircraft and equipment from the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. Units throughout these countries as well as others in Europe were also electronically connected to the exercise.

Realistic exercise scenarios were developed based on issues encountered by combat forces in the Global War On Terror (GWOT). Efforts were focused on having an up-to-date picture of the battlefield to increase combat effectiveness and save coalition lives. For example, collecting imagery that revealed insurgents placing Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and then analyzing the images in real time was used to prove information and data could successfully be passed across networks.

According to Navy Commander Joseph A. Smith, deputy director of the NGA Airborne Integration Office and director of the Empire Challenge series, the exercise has improved the military's capabilities and effectiveness for the GWOT as well as homeland defense efforts. "Empire Challenge 2006 included ground-breaking demonstrations of military capability. For the first time, we can downlink live data from a British aircraft directly to a U.S. ground station, and then send it via satellite to another allied country to be analyzed. Capabilities like this will enable the U.S. and its allies to share each other's intelligence data, building a timely, more accurate picture on today's battlefield," said Smith.

During Empire Challenge, convoys and special operations teams operated on a simulated battlefield populated with insurgents in a desert environment. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and manned aircraft such as the U.K. Tornado GR4 jet with the Raptor Imagery

Pod flew overhead capturing high resolution imagery. The video was viewed in real-time by imagery analysts and targeteers from the U.S., United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada who exploited the data.

Air Force Lt. Col. Jill Singleton, deputy director of interoperability demonstrations for the U.S. Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM) Joint Systems Integration Command (JSIC), said the strength of the communication network proved allied imagery experts in Australia, Canada, Great Britain and Europe could “participate from their home countries as their assets fly over China Lake. This allows us to more fully leverage our allied capabilities and improve the timeliness of intelligence information.”

EC 06 is part of a series sponsored by the Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence and conducted in concert with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and USJFCOM. Plans are already underway for EC07.

NGA is a Department of Defense combat support agency and a member of the National Intelligence Community. Its mission is to provide timely, relevant and accurate geospatial intelligence in support of our national security. Geospatial intelligence is the exploitation and analysis of imagery and geospatial information to describe, assess, and visually depict physical features and geographically referenced activities on the Earth. Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., NGA has major facilities in the greater Washington, D.C., and St. Louis, Mo., areas with NGA support teams worldwide.

For more information about Empire Challenge, contact Marshall Hudson at 301-227-2057 or [marshall.a.hudson@nga.mil](mailto:marshall.a.hudson@nga.mil).